



## ***Students as Environmental Leaders in Their Communities***

- **Student Networking in NSW:**
  - Wagga Wagga Regional SRC;
  - Central Coast Student Voice Alliance
- **Turning Vision Into Reality:**  
*Mount Waverley Secondary*
- **Taking Action in Focus:** *Brauer College*
- **SRCs, School Pride and School Spirit**
- **VicSRC: Recognition Awards & Winners;**  
*Royal Commission Presentation; 2016 Dates*

### **Resources:**

- How to work in a team
- Elections and SRC planning
- Ideas and action resources for the Education State
- *The Case for Inclusive Learning Systems*
- **International:** *Journal of Student Voice;*  
*Student Voice Seminar: 2016, USA;*  
*BJET: Student Voice and digital technologies*
- YERP - online resources
- *Connect ... available on-line ... on facebook*  
*... archived ... access to other on-line resources*

# Connect

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## Cover:

Winter's Flat Primary School, Castlemaine

Group Action Award winners at the  
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## Why does Connect exist?

**Connect** has been  
published bi-monthly since 1979!

*It aims to:*

- document student participation approaches and initiatives;
- support reflective practices;
- develop and share resources.

## Connect:

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# This Issue:

This issue now marks **36 years** of *Connect* - and yes, there is a sense that I'm counting them off one by one!! Next year is our 37th - auspicious only as a prime number; we need to wait until issue 240 (at 40 years) or 250 (in 2021 I think) for further retrospectives and celebrations.



There continues to be a sense that 'Student Voice' is now officially recognised as central to education improvement and change. **The Education State** papers from the (relatively) new Victorian State Government are both explicit about providing students with "a greater say in decisions that affect their learning and their lives at school", and also opening the door for such voice and participation to infuse all aspects of school initiatives.

We still need to advocate strongly for authenticity in these ideas. It is very easy for approaches to be tokenistic - or to replicate existing arrangements that exclude and marginalise some students. It is easy for schools to think they are 'doing voice' by listening to a few articulate students and then doing little about what they hear. It is easy to hear 'convenient' voices while ignoring (or punishing) the 'inconvenient' ones. It is easy for elected students to become instruments of approaches that advantage some students over others.

I wrote about some of these issues in the last issue of *Connect*, and touch upon them again in this issue, cautioning about traditional expectations of students' work on issues of 'school pride' and 'school spirit' ... and how this can restrict expectations of students' capabilities, lead to dealing with symptoms in superficial ways while leaving causes unexamined, and encourage 'peer blaming' (see page 7).

I've also been thinking more and more about the underlying purpose of student participation and voice - and whether these concepts are seen as being for **public** or **private** benefit. Three very different positions emerge:

- **first**, it (student participation/voice) improves the work of professionals (via feedback to teachers, students as data sources etc) but leaves roles, relationships and purposes unchanged;
- **secondly**, it enhances the engagement and thus capacity of the individual students who are involved - participation improves outcomes for them ... changing both student and teacher roles, but leaving outcomes and structures unchanged;
- **thirdly**, it builds partnerships between students and teachers (changing their traditional roles) so that they collaborate to explore, challenge and transform both **how** learning happens and, in fact, the **purposes** of learning - in ways that benefit **all**.

Lots to think about over the summer holidays!

## Next Issue ...

There are already three major pieces of writing being promised for next February's *Connect*. Hopefully we'll read about ways that approaches such as Student Action Teams change the ways in which both primary and secondary schools operate. And we'll also explore alternative approaches to 'voice' and 'participation' through music production - for young people who have rejected traditional approaches to schooling ... and traditional means of hoping to have their voices heard.

There's also room for your contributions. While I'm sympathetic to a desire to 'get away from it all', these holidays provide an ideal time to be reflective about important practices.

**Roger Holdsworth**

**Next Issue: #217: February 2016**

**Deadline for material: end of January, 2016**



# Insightful, constructive and visionary ideas

Over 100 students from southern NSW met in August to improve student learning and wellbeing in their schools. They collaborated, socialised and put forward ideas for their own SRCs and the Region. This was the **Wagga Wagga Regional SRC Conference**. It met over five days in the small town of Murrumbateman, just outside Canberra, drawing students from the greater Wagga Wagga Region – stretching from Wollongong in the east, Albury and Eden in the south, Broken Hill in the west and Cobar in the north.

For some students, the concept of a Regional SRC conference was new and exciting; for others, it was an experience that had been talked about from year to year in their own SRCs. For students in public schools from the old **Illawarra and South East Region** of NSW, the Regional SRC conference had been an annual event attracting around 60-70 students from the area each year for 15 years. It had successfully talked about issues and created a community between these schools. However, with the new restructuring of the regions, it was *'out with the old and in with the new'*; all of a sudden, the region almost doubled in size. And so the Regional SRC responded, enabling more than 100 students to attend this inaugural event.

In 2014, a South East SRC Executive Team of 16 students had been elected by their peers to run the next conference. This team all contributed and organised

collectively, with the guidance of teachers Murray Walpole and Rob Attwood. However, the team had no previous experience running a conference of this magnitude; in fact, they'd never seen the venue nor even heard of half the schools beforehand.

The core idea of the Regional Conference is that *it is run by the students, for the students*. As soon as the student participants hop off the buses and unpack, the Executive Team are in charge. This means that the students are incredibly receptive to not only the activities but also the guest speakers and the people who run the workshops, as there is a system of mutual respect that is shown both to the participants and back to the leaders themselves.

Throughout the week, participants worked in a variety of different activities. The first day and the last days were mainly for travel and the middle three

days were intensive workshop days. Here, students could join four workshops presented by experts, to discuss ideas of youth mental health, teamwork, body image and leadership skills in general. In these workshops, students learned skills and were educated in the issues discussed; in turn, they will take these activities back to their own schools and run the activities or have an active role in educating other students about the issues as well.

Interspersed between the workshops were colour group sessions where each student was in a group with students from other schools to discuss issues and to brainstorm ideas so that people around the region can share their passions with other people with similar interests and similar problems. Two people from the Executive team ran each group and brought their own culture to the group. By the end of the week the bonds created were quite tight and there was a lot of colour group pride that spilled out in the form of chants and calls. This pride was also helped by the fact that there were many different whole group activities run to give the students a chance to bond and have some fun. Those included the traditional games night on the first night of camp, followed by trivia and then a disco on the last night to round off a stellar week with some good music and a good







party to go along with it. A new addition this year was an **Amazing Race**, which was suggested by the Executive Team and was run immensely successfully. These activities just added to the atmosphere of the Camp and continued to facilitate the creation of bonds and unity among the students.

But it was not all fun and games, as on Day 4 was the **Big Ideas Forum** – where each colour group presented two ideas to the entire conference and the pros and cons were raised about each idea. In an indication of the heated debate between students, only three quarters of the ideas managed to get discussed in the one and a half hour slot, however those that did were insightful, constructive and visionary. These ideas were all collated and then passed on to the next Executive Team, which will decide which ideas to focus on during the year and to implement region wide.

Finally the last day arrived and the tears started to flow. There was sadness for many as that day was perhaps the last time they would see so many of those people. The connections made during the five day camp by students with people with a similar mindset, drive and enthusiasm for leadership and life was one of the greatest things that the Regional Conference had to offer. The opportunity it gave to students to come to a place where they were accepted and could create real friends, while making a change to their community and learning new

skills and strategies about how to be a better person, is absolutely amazing and unique in NSW. On that last Friday morning in August, the Executive Team officially handed down the leadership from their generation to the next, as 16 new students took up the challenge. As the chords of **Time of Our Lives** (the official camp song) played in the background, the noses ran, people cried and goodbyes were said.

For us it is 'goodbye' but for so many it is 'hello' as this initial Conference will open the door for students to create history and continue to leave a legacy of positive, action-based leadership, kindness and empathy for all and a positive and resilient attitude that is instilled in all those who are lucky

enough to go to camp and experience the joy, enthusiasm and inspiration that is a Wagga Wagga SRC Conference. This year was a resounding success and, as the team works hard on the next camp, I'm sure it will become bigger and better as time goes on.

On behalf of the Executive Team, can I thank Murray and Rob who work immensely hard behind the scenes to make this opportunity happen for so many; the team at Warrambui Conference Centre for being the most accommodating hosts ever; and the participants for attending what we thought as a group could be a risk when we first set out on this adventure. Student leadership in NSW needs more opportunities like this. Without the skills, what will future leaders be able to accomplish? Those skills start with conferences like these, which teach people how to lead.

For those of you who are interested in following the story of the Wagga Wagga SRC from this year's conference, a magazine similar to **Connect** has been launched, called **Leaders of Tmrw**. Edited and written by students from all over the Region, this publication hopefully can be used as a communication tool across the state and hopefully will lead to further connections with other regions. Contact me for more details.

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# A spotlight on Student Action

Throughout 2015, student representatives from the schools of the **Central Coast Student Voice Alliance (CCSVA)** in NSW have been taking increased responsibility for the Alliance's directions. They have been turning the 'spotlight' on individual schools within the Alliance, to report to each other about the action that students have been taking around mental health.



The **NSW Central Coast Student Voice Alliance** consists of students from 14 government secondary schools. Usually three to five student representatives, from Years 8 to 12, have attending scheduled meetings of the Alliance, however the schools have included many more students within their own individual school-based programs. The representatives have come together to plan, report and organise around their shared themes.

During 2015, the **CCSVA** held three whole day meetings – in Term 1 at Gorokan High School, in Term 3 at

Narara Valley High School and in Term 4 at Brisbane Water Secondary College – Umina Campus. Each of these schools nominated themselves to be the host school for these meetings, with student representatives from those schools leading the planning, organisation and setting of the on-the-day meeting agenda. This has been a very positive action, as students are beginning to lead the initiative and feel a true sense of ownership. Three meetings was deemed to be appropriate for 2015 as Term 2 is often busy with curriculum, assessment and reporting for students and teachers

– and during this term, student voice actions were able to be focused, planned and undertaken for a prolonged period within the schools themselves.

Particularly exciting has been the establishment of 'Spotlight Schools'. This has enabled one or two schools to be 'stars' at each meeting and to explicitly describe the student voice actions in their school. Each school has been allocated five to ten minutes to talk about their journey at each meeting. This recognises the individuality of each school's context and enables the sharing of ideas in detail.



## Our hopes and plans ... and actions

As reported in *Connect* 210 (December 2014), the **Student Alliance** intended to focus upon and support initiatives that related to the mental health of young people. The precise form of this initiative was different in each school. It was essentially determined through students' analysis of their own specific student needs within the context of their community. Aligned to this focus area, during Term 2, students were able to engage in discussions with Andrew Johnson, the **NSW Advocate for Children and Young People**, to express their opinions about issues of importance to them as citizens of Central Coast communities.

As the **CCSVA** has evolved, meetings have been established with a regular structure, an identity formed with the use of a logo on documents, and templates have been developed to scaffold planning and organisational steps to support the host schools. The website continues to be updated with resources to encourage student voice learning, whilst teachers have worked collaboratively to contribute to, and to share ideas across schools that support student voice and leadership.

Individual schools have been developing and reporting on their own initiatives. For example, students from the Berkeley Vale Campus (BVC) of Tuggerah Lakes Secondary College report on their initiatives in the article below.

We also held a second student Expo (see photo on previous page) to illustrate the mental health related actions undertaken by schools during 2015. Schools set up displays to present the various initiatives that they had been taking.

## Difficulties

The turnover of student representatives at Alliance meetings has posed some difficulty. This has meant that newer students have had to be learning about the **CCSVA**. We are aiming to overcome this by targeting and developing specific action learning or leadership skills at each meeting. These skills and activities are then uploaded to the website and thus made available for students/schools to refer to in the future.

## Future directions

Three further meetings of the Student Voice Alliance are planned for 2016. Again, each meeting will turn the 'spotlight' on action by a particular school, and also include some skill training workshops around areas such as 'action research', 'challenges and problem solving' and 'student planning'.

Further information is available at: <http://ow.ly/VpnGO>

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## Tuggerah Lakes Secondary College: Berkeley Vale Campus

Our hopes and plans at BVC are to give students more input in the way their school is run as well as creating a sense of student empowerment within their school.

So far this year, we have achieved a student directed proposal aimed at minimising stress and anxiety around assessment tasks. This was then put forward at staff meetings for approval. We are currently awaiting feedback on this proposal.

Activities completed by students have been a school-wide survey on stress and anxiety around assessment tasks, as well as *Students with Learning Partners* in which we examined teaching strategies. More recently a student proposal has been presented to staff regarding the information we have gathered from the survey.

Some of the things we have found difficult have been presenting ideas to staff which, at times, felt intimidating. We overcame these with teacher support, guidance and courage.

Some of the things that have been exciting have been seeing the change in the school as well as the sense of accomplishment we have gained as Student Voice representatives for our school. We believe that we have left the school with more student involvement that future cohorts will benefit from.

The **CCSVA** organisation has made the changes to our school as easy and achievable as possible. The Student Voice meeting days have given our team the medium to learn from other schools and provide ideas which we may implement in the future. The **CCSVA** has been a vital aspect of our role.

**Kimberley, Sam and Olivia**





# School Pride? School Spirit?

Student organisations (such as Student Councils) are often urged to focus on building *school spirit* or *school pride*. And this is something they struggle with. They hold lunchtime activities; they organise socials; they parade publicly at assemblies; they dress up; they give awards. And still they often report that they have difficulties in engaging students – beyond the few formal representatives.

Currently, the Victorian Department of Education and Training is asking all schools to choose from six initiatives for action that will “lift student achievement outcomes, wellbeing and engagement in learning”. One of these initiatives is: *Empowering students and building school pride*. The outline for this initiative suggests that “the whole school community will engage with students so they have a voice in the learning process, and fully and proudly participate in school life.”

While the focus on **student voice**, **participation** and **empowerment** is to be applauded loudly, the association of these with ‘school pride’ may be more tricky.

There are several concerns with ideas of ‘school pride’ or ‘school spirit’, and these need to be investigated and addressed.

Traditionally, a focus on building ‘school pride’ or ‘school spirit’ has been something that Student Councils have been asked to address – and this has been used to limit the work of these Councils to safe and conservative areas. Someone (sometimes, but not always, the students) has identified that there is a problem: students aren’t behaving positively; perhaps this is as trivially as not wearing the uniform correctly. This has been identified as a ‘lack of school pride’ – and students are then seen as disengaged from learning. Perhaps some are behaving badly. Students – usually the ‘responsible’ ones, who have been elected or selected to positions of responsibility – are then asked to address this. And they respond by developing various activities: social events, ‘cheer-leading’, speeches and exhortations ... fun activities, principally aimed to ‘rev up’ this pride.

I’ve recently been reading a fine book by Marc Brasof: *Student Voice and School Governance* (a full review of this in the next issue of *Connect*). Marc outlines and analyses various stories from Madison High School (in the USA). The first story deals with a perceived lack of ‘school spirit’. The Student Government leaders tried various initiatives, but poorly attended student meetings and disagreements led to disappointment and disillusionment. One of the students then quietly suggested that the real issue was a lack of student ‘ownership’ over what was happening at their school. The group turned their focus to a decline in school support

for mandatory learning approaches, a lack of resources, curriculum and organisational changes – and identified disengagement as a consequence of these real concerns.

And so the conversation turned from the need for students to address school spirit and school pride *per se*, to the need for the Student Council to identify and address the underlying causes.

I have no basic argument with ideas of ‘spirit’ and ‘pride’; however we need to see these as **symptoms** or **outcomes** of what is happening, rather than the processes themselves. As with building ‘self-esteem’, it becomes pointless to try to address the symptoms in isolation without doing something about the causes.

**What is it that the students are being asked to express pride in?** If many, some or even **any** students feel that they are **not** involved with and sharing decision-making about what is happening in the school, then they are not going to feel proud about what is happening there. If school and education is happening **to** them, rather than **with** or **by** them, they might be able to be ‘revved up’ temporarily, but this masks the absence of any true pride in something they’re engaged with. So a focus on the symptoms, the ‘pride’, will do nothing unless there are changes to the underlying relationships and responsibilities.

Further, and this is intricately linked to the above point, **asking a Student Council to focus on building school pride risks setting students against students**. It is usually only some students who are ‘blamed’ for a lack of ‘school pride’. As I noted in a similar commentary piece in *Connect* 213 (June 2015; p 32), traditional Student Council approaches may identify the ‘good’ students (the positive, even compliant ones ... the ones who Adam Fletcher calls ‘convenient student voices’) and co-opt them to police the behaviour of the ‘other’ students (the ‘inconvenient student voices’). Thus Student Councils have called for the exclusion of disruptive students, without recognising that they represent these students too. I argued that Student Councils must identify the causes of disruption and disengagement and attempt to change these

in order to achieve access and success for all. Similarly, Student Councils have traditionally attempted to build ‘school pride’ by themselves blaming and excluding those students not exhibiting such pride – perhaps more subtly ... but still acting to stigmatise, alienate and marginalise those who don’t conform to current notions of the exhibition of ‘pride’.

## What should be done?

Relationships within schools are vitally important. The World Health Organisation’s model for a **Health Promoting School** identified the area of ‘**school ethos/environment**’ as part of an interlocking framework, along with ‘**classroom learning and teaching**’ and ‘**partnerships**’. Building supportive, trusting and collaborative relationships is vital.

The Victorian DET’s *Education State Framework* starts by describing this initiative as: “Schools will develop approaches that give students a greater say in the decisions that affect their learning and their lives at school”. We need to see this as applying to **all** students, not just the ‘convenient’ or ‘compliant’ ones. How the school develops approaches that **include** previously marginalised students will be central to the degree to which they can “fully and proudly participate in school life”.

That’s necessary, but probably not enough. Schools also need to ensure that both the process and outcomes of learning are **valued** by all students, and that they see value for themselves in their participation. Continued research shows that up to 25% of students do not finish secondary school; increasing numbers of students are experiencing disengagement by Grade 4. Peter Hutton (Principal of Templestowe College; see *Connect* 212, April 2015; p 5) has asserted that school “only really works for about a third of students.”

What is it that **all** students value from their school experience? Are there outcomes that **all** students recognise as important ... not just for some future, but for their identities and roles within today’s world?

These questions can form the basis for students themselves to **investigate** the nature and **causes** of pride and engagement – and to be central partners in leading initiatives to address them. No ‘pep up’, but real change.

Only then will these students feel proud of their school ... when they can honestly and openly say that they both formed the processes of their learning, and that that learning provided them with what they (and others) saw as worthwhile outcomes.

Roger Holdsworth

# Turning vision into reality

Student Leadership at Mount Waverley Secondary College has come such a long way since the beginning of the year and our last article in the June edition of *Connect*. This year we had Student Leaders in **Student Leadership Teams** at Year 10 and 11 and a **Student Connect Committee** at Year 11. The inaugural **Teach the Teacher Committee** consists of Year 11 and 12 Student Leaders. In Term 2, we created the **Year 9 Student Leadership Team** and **Student Connect Committee**. The Student Leadership Teams worked together to turn vision into reality.

Over the course of the year, we have discovered many things that have led to us making changes to the College's leadership structure for 2016 and beyond, building on what we have created this year. In 2016, the **College Captains** will be working with the **Sports Captains** and the inaugural **Arts, Music and Sustainability Captains** to lead the Student Leaders, House Captains and Prefects to further enhance student voice and make a positive difference in the College as a whole.

## Year 9 Student Leadership Team and Student Connect Committee

What a year it's been! This year, as part of the **Year 9 Leadership Team**, we have achieved many goals and have been exposed to various new opportunities. When we first assembled at the end of Term One, we were so excited to begin new projects and improve our school community.

Honoured to be the bridge between the students and the teachers, we eagerly

sat down to our first meeting. We discussed our individual visions for the development of school life, and how we could bring them to reality. Some of our ideas at the very beginning of the year involved improving the environment of the school grounds (such as rubbish problems) and recognising the general excellence and academic achievements of our fellow peers.

From the beginning, we were welcomed by leaders from each year level, who constantly motivated and encouraged us to achieve our goals. They acted as mentors by helping us to run our meetings and contributing to our visions and ideas. They were very supportive of our decisions and helped us bring them to life.

This year, the Year 9 Leadership Team had the fantastic opportunity to organise Casual Clothes Day in Term 4. After taking surveys from each home group, we gained the general consensus that our cohort wanted a sports-themed Casual Clothes Day

(other themes that were considered were summer, denim and Christmas). We decided to donate all funds raised on the day to the Cathy Freeman Foundation, which aims to bridge the education gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. We organised a fairy floss and popcorn machine booth, both of which were very popular! We also ran some fun races for the enjoyment of the students. Tying in well with our sports theme, members of the leadership team held a 100 metres sprint and an egg and spoon race. Participants were able to compare their time for the 100 meter race against Cathy Freeman's time. Overall, it was a great success, raising \$2389!!!

We are now trying to promote house pride. At Mount Waverley Secondary College, we have six houses: **Landy, Goolagong, Cuthbert, Fraser, Bradman** and **Whitten**; however, we don't really incorporate the house system into our daily school lives. Our first step towards raising awareness was to distribute house ribbons, which embodied the colour of each house, to all the students. In order to continue this legacy, we are aiming to start influencing the new Year 7s by informing and promoting pride in their year level. This will hopefully be achieved by the upcoming Orientation Day, enabling us to talk and interact with the Year 7s. Eventually, the promotion of house pride will be the solution to many of our problems. We would be able to



Year 9 Leaders



Year 9 Leaders - Casual Clothes Day - Sports theme



introduce a points system that would award students based on their behaviour and efforts. This will hopefully boost attendance and the will to participate. It would also reduce rubbish and motivate students to do well in their studies. Points would also be taken off for breaking the rules and misbehaviour.

Currently, we are conducting an art competition to find a suitable logo for each house. All students who are currently attending Mount Waverley Secondary College in 2015 are eligible to participate and so far we have received some outstanding submissions. The winning submissions will be used as the official logo for the house and used on banners and posters and during sporting events.

As a team, we have worked as a single unit, which helped us to have an impact on the school community. We represented the voice of the students by communicating with our peers and reporting back to our teachers. As a whole, the year has been amazing and the outcomes were exceptional.

### Year 10 Student Leadership Team

Our **Year 10 Student Leadership Team** is fearless when it comes to improving the school environment through embracing positivity, awareness of worldly issues and a sense of fun; thus, we are heavily involved in inter-school events to interact with fellow leaders from other schools to gain ideas.

On September 10th, two Year 10 Student Leaders were selected to participate in **SunSmart's Think Tank** event. Along with 38 other Victorian students, we spent the day collaborating on strategies for impactful campaigns directed at teenagers within various platforms (eg. social media). The urgency of this issue meant that many plans have been created to implement this



**Year 10 Leaders - Casual Clothes Day - Cystic Fibrosis Rose-selling**

in secondary schools in the hope that young Australians will grow to be **SunSmart** adults.

In September, a group of Year 10 Leaders was given the opportunity to assist in the **Primary Schools Parliament Convention** in conjunction with the VicSRC. We worked with a group of passionate Year 6 students to discuss Parliament-related topics. The convention began with speeches by various figures in our government including the Minister for Education, Hon James Merlino. During the day, the Year 6s were able to express and discuss their opinions on certain matters that were brought up. We were divided into small groups with the Year 6s from several different schools, and were responsible for guiding their discussions and assisting them in developing a small presentation on their assigned topic. It was certainly enlightening and inspiring to see intelligent discussion from such young minds! It was a great opportunity for the leaders to experience working with younger students and also seeing the overwhelming potential they all have to be great leaders.

**Year 10 Leaders Casual Clothes Day - Cystic Fibrosis Victoria**



If you ask any of our **Year 10 Student Leaders** what our biggest success was, they would most certainly mention our **Roses for Cystic Fibrosis Day**. In supporting **Cystic Fibrosis Victoria**, the **Year 10 SLT** worked together to create a fundraising event that the whole school would be able to participate in. Therefore, because of the similarity in pronunciation between "65 roses" to **Cystic Fibrosis**, a small committee of Student Leaders decided to handcraft origami roses and purchase plastic red roses to sell. We dedicated numerous lunchtimes to turn our vision into a reality with the help of Ms Vicky Passmore, our Student Activities Coordinator. Along with selling the roses for a low cost of \$1.50-\$2 each, students were able to write a personalised message to go with the roses to whomever they wanted. They were then given back to us to sort and distribute to the recipients of the roses over the following days. Kristen Fletcher, a volunteer co-ordinator from CFV, was also invited to visit the College to speak to assemblies for every year level regarding what Cystic Fibrosis is all about, in order for students to have a sound understanding of what they were donating to and how the money will be used. The rose-selling event, held during lunchtime at a well-known area of Mount Waverley Secondary College, was highly celebratory - complete with red and white balloons as well as free wristbands to give out. Word spread so quickly that we were able to sell all of the roses on the very first day! In the end, we successfully raised a grand total of \$2900. It was amazing to see so many students enjoying themselves while supporting a wonderful cause.

Recently, a group of Student Leaders, including several from our **Year 10 SLT**,





**National Young Leaders Day**

attended the **National Young Leaders Day Conference**, which was held in the Melbourne Exhibition Centre. Guest speakers told their stories and inspired us to 'Master the Little', and encouraged us to make an impact in our school and community by simply doing small things. The conference was a meaningful and wonderful experience that empowered young leaders to think creatively and consistently persisting what they strive for. As Jules Allen beautifully summarised, "You can't afford to give up."

### **Year 11 Student Leadership Team and Student Connect Committee**

This year, Mount Waverley Secondary College launched its first **Year 11 Student Leadership Team**, as part of our long-term vision of establishing a leadership team at each year level within the College. Due to the large number of high quality and outstanding applications at the end of Year 10, two groups were formed within the Year 11 Leadership team: a **Student Leadership Team (SLT)** and a **Student Connect Committee (SCC)**. Creating two teams allowed for a large group of strong students to work collaboratively towards a common goal of improving the College climate, improving relationships between teachers and students and boosting college morale.

The **Student Leadership Team** at Year 11 provided a range of opportunities for students to become involved in different activities both within and outside the College. These projects and campaigns that they are involved in will have an impact globally and also in their local and school community. Through these opportunities, Student Leaders develop teamwork skills by working with other students within their team and in different year levels, learn new leadership, communication and public speaking skills and gain confidence. This skillset they develop is a great asset for these students in becoming successful leaders of the future.

**Year 11 Student Leaders** have actively taken part in a range of opportunities and activities to improve student-teacher relationships within the college and empower student voice, to create a positive college environment. The **Student Connect Committee (SCC)** created a new '**Connect and Cre8**' Program. This program helped improve student relationships between Junior and Senior students of the College, where Year 11 students assisted and mentored Year 8 students in their Science, Maths and Humanities classes. Earlier in the year, the program was

available for Student Leaders, but by promoting it at assemblies, students across the year level became involved, and all of those involved found it an enjoyable and rewarding experience.

Leaders of the **Student Leadership Team (SLT)** would also help with mentoring Year 8 Leaders, assisting them in enhancing their leadership skills. Leaders across both groups have also worked collaboratively as student helpers in many College events such as the **Year 8 to 9 Transition Program** from our College's Junior Campus to Senior Campus, Information Nights for prospective families, Parent-Teacher-Student Conferences and the College Open Day and Night. Many of the leaders are members of the **Teach the Teacher Committee** and Mount Waverley's **Green Team**, a sustainability group aimed at raising awareness about climate change and working towards a sustainable College. Year 11 Leaders have also organised the Year 11 Fancy Dress Party as well as **R U OK? Week**.

This year, three Year 11 Leaders (Isabelle, Shivani and Liz) and one Year 10 Leader (Feyla) attended the **VicSRC Congress** camp at Ormond College, Melbourne University. The camp seeks to bring together student leaders from



**Year 11 Leaders - Casual Clothes Day**



**R U OK? Day**





**At the VicSRC Congress**

strong relations with the **VicSRC** and have participated in many of their events such as the **Teach the Teacher** program, regional conferences and the VicSRC's annual **Congress Camp**.

The Year 11 Student Leaders have proven this year that they are capable of pushing boundaries and unlocking their incredible potential. We had to learn how to manage our time and be well organised to meet the challenges of the chaotic world of VCE. Looking back, each and every Year 11 Student Leader would agree that the experiences and skills we have gained are invaluable, and as we enter into the next step of our leadership journey as College Captains and Prefects, we are confident we will achieve our true potential and will strive to become successful future leaders.

### **Teach the Teacher Committee**

**Teach the Teacher** is a program designed by the VicSRC that provides students with an avenue to voice their opinions. Nine Student Leaders in Year 11 and Year 12 who are committed to creating positive change and truly making a difference to our school, set about improving student-teacher relationships and enhancing teaching and learning outcomes. Our aim was to create positive lasting change and truly make a difference by helping students develop and lead conversations with their teachers.

across the state to discuss issues within Victorian schools. On the first day we were assigned to an issues group, which focused on a particular topic of concern, such as bullying, funding, environment and school culture. The camp was centred around a formal **Congress** held on the second day, in which two members of each issue group would make their belief statement about their topic and supporting argument for it. **Congress** would ask questions and debate, after which time they voted to pass or reject the motion. The **Congress** was so unique and such an amazing experience because it was conducted in the same manner that a parliamentary congress would have been.

The **Congress** camp allowed us to meet some wonderful leaders from all walks of life: students and the camp crew alike. Each student brought their own unique perspective to the stage which was the very purpose of the camp. We had several guest speakers, including the Minister for Education, the Hon James Merlino, who had open conversations with us about how we could use our power as students to influence change and betterment for our communities.

At the **Congress** camp, 15 students from across Victoria are elected by delegates of the camp to make up the **VicSRC Executive**. One of our Year 11 Student Leaders, **Liz Chiem**, was voted in as a **VicSRC Executive Member** for 2015-2016 and became the first student from the College to do so. As part of her role as an Executive member, she will work with various organisations across Victoria to act upon student issues to bring about positive changes to the Victorian education system, as well as advocating and empowering student voice.

Outside the College, the Year 11 Student Leaders have achieved great success through involvement in a range of events, activities and groups. Students have participated in events through the **United Nations Youth Australia** such as **EVATT**, the **Education State Consultation**, the **Oaktree Climate Justice Summit**, the **Under Age, World Vision Youth Conferences** and **40 Hour Famine**, the **Feel.Think.Flow Refugee Summit**, the **Halogen Foundation's National Young Leaders Day**, the **State Schools' Constitutional Convention**, and the **Primary School Parliamentary Convention** as student facilitators. Mount Waverley Leaders have also developed



**The Teach the Teacher Group**



We surveyed Year 9–12 students, and found that many students felt they were unable to give feedback to their teachers and felt uncomfortable doing so. We believed this was something that we could improve on, and designed a professional development session for teachers around the topic of **'feedback'**. We also surveyed teachers, and found particularly inspirational reflections of why they love teaching, which we displayed around the College. We spoke at staff meetings and assemblies to share with students and teachers what we were hoping to achieve through our journey.

The main part of this program was our Professional Learning session with our teachers. We presented to staff on the importance of feedback in the classroom, using data from the survey results and Professor John Hattie's research on effect size, which demonstrated the importance of feedback. We also used various videos. Using teachers' input, we created a College-wide feedback *pro forma* to establish a way for students to give feedback to their teachers.

In a second Professional Learning session, we invited teachers to tell us their thoughts regarding the draft feedback *pro forma* (see the form on pages following), and they said that they were extremely happy with what we had produced. We had helpful, productive discussions with our teachers regarding certain aspects they believed we could improve.

We have made a genuine impact, evident in the feedback we have received from both students and teachers. Feedback regarding the Professional Learning sessions was very positive, with teachers saying it was *'hard to fault'*, *'they felt important'*, they were *'very impressed with everything'* and they'll be back for more. Teachers came up to us at the end with tears in their eyes. It was truly

wonderful to know that as students, we can have a real influence on our teachers.

Students have also discussed the positive impact that we have had, saying that they *'can see a huge improvement in the way teachers teach now'*, *'it has made everyone realise that it is possible for students to talk to teachers and give them feedback and it doesn't have to be in a negative light'* and *'it's nice for the teacher to hear the good stuff once in a while but constructive criticism is good too.'*

We also emailed John Hattie himself. We told Professor Hattie of our vision and how we had used his research to translate that vision into reality. In his reply Hattie encouraged us to go further and said: '

*To see the action in the schools, and in your case led by students – wow, that is impressive. Your future as researchers, thinking as evaluators seems assured and this is among the most powerful ways of thinking.'*

He suggested we could take our theme of feedback deeper, looking specifically at *'how much and the nature of feedback received, rather than how much is given.'* Hattie said that, *'the teachers who made the greatest difference were considered impactful, inspired, or passionate'*. This was certainly what we had found with the student surveys and in the Professional Learning sessions, so knowing that researched backed up what we believed about teachers – that they have the ability to change the world by making a difference in their students' lives – was truly empowering.

We were privileged to win the **VicSRC Second Runner-up Group Action Recognition Award** for 2015, as part of the annual **VicSRC Recognition Awards**, celebrating best practice in student

voice, leadership and participation in Victoria. We are so proud of what we have done to unlock the power and potential of student voice at the college.

Through this opportunity, we have grown immensely as leaders and are proud of our achievements. In giving teachers and students a medium through which they can exchange ideas, we have learned to represent student and teacher voice accurately and that our passion and commitment can have a significant influence on the lives of others. Working with such a passionate group of students who are so committed to giving back to our school and working hard to make our school better, has been inspiring and empowering. To know that we have truly made a lasting impact in our first year of **Teach the Teacher** at the College is humbling and we are honoured to have been a part of it.

We would like to thank **Miss Hayley Dureau**, Head of Student Leadership at the College, for her inspiration and ongoing support throughout the year. Also, a big 'thank you' must go to **Emma Myers** from the VicSRC, to Scoresby Secondary College, and to the staff and the students who have supported us on our journey.

We hope to build on what we have achieved this year, with a new team of Year 11 and 12 students continuing every year into the future as a **Teach the Teacher Executive Committee** similar to this year, working together with all students, not just Student Leaders, to represent student voice. This means including students who do not have a leadership role in the **Executive Committee** as well. Advocating for student voice and representation is an incredibly powerful tool that, when combined with collaboration between teachers and students, we can use to achieve previously unimagined progress.



**The Teach the Teacher PL Session**



We envision *Teach the Teacher* continuing as a forum for amplifying student voice to improve teaching and learning outcomes. Whether this means continuing with our 2015 theme of 'feedback' and becoming more specific, or expanding into other areas of improvement, the 2015 *Teach the Teacher* team is simply the beginning of change in the College. We hope that we have created many ripples of change, so that future Year 11 and 12 students have the opportunity to help the College make progress and influence and inspire others.

We hope that, moving forward, Year 7 and 8 students at the Junior Campus are represented by the *Teach the Teacher* team as well, and that all students are able to attend open meetings that the *Teach the Teacher* Executive Committee runs, so that student voice is truly represented, not just through surveys.

*Teach the Teacher* at Mount Waverley Secondary College in 2015 has truly embodied the truth that, *'Youth are not just leaders of tomorrow, but most importantly, they are the young leaders of today.'*

**The Green Team**

## Reflection

All big changes start from small initiatives, and we, the leaders of 2015, exemplify this fact. In a team of passionate, committed and enthusiastic leaders, we contributed to the College, and through supporting each other, initiating and driving change, working tirelessly towards a common goal, a campus changed for the better.

The accomplishments of every member inspires another, as we look up to our elder leaders for advice and support and the younger ones for enthusiasm and fresh ideas. A Year 12 Prefect of our college won the **VCAA Leadership Award**, following in the footsteps of last year's winner.

We have a leader in our Year 11 team who is on the Executive team of the VicSRC. We have winners of the *Kwong Lee Dow Scholarship*, *Monash Lodge Award*, *Norman Smith Scholarship*, community service awards and so many other awards in every single year level. These students validate the hard work and righteous attitude that are the values expected of our team members. We are a College held together by connections between students, aided by the gigantic network of leadership with branches in every corner,

carrying vitality, honesty, hard work and good intentions throughout the system.

And because we want to create change, we need to change. We need to be the change that we seek. Thus, 2016 sees alterations in the student leadership structure at the college which will provide us with more opportunities and a robust platform for student voice to be heard.

We, as Student Leaders, take pride in assisting our peers and our teachers. We take pride in creating positive change at our College, maximising student involvement and being the life force of our College.

**Vidarshana Satish, Tikiri Silva**  
(Year 9)

**Athaya Anaduta, Feyla Anja**  
(Year 10)

**Shivani Thiyagarajah,  
Sanjna Chandra, Mihika de Bruyne**  
(Year 11)

**Netania Lim**  
(*Teach the Teacher*)

**Madu Balashanmugan,  
Chester Ngan**  
(*Reflection*)

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## SAMPLE FEEDBACK PRO FORMA

In class, I:

(You may tick as many responses as you like)

- ☐ Talk too much
- ☐ Give enough instruction
- ☐ Give you too many resources
- ☐ Need to provide more examples
- ☐ Make you feel valued
- ☐ Include enough technology
- ☐ Allow enough group work
- ☐ Let you give me feedback
- ☐ Give you enough feedback
- ☐ Treat you fairly
- ☐ Respect your opinion
- ☐ Motivate you to learn through my enthusiasm
- ☐ Make the learning intentions and success criteria clear for each lesson
- ☐ Other (please specify):

What can I do to improve the above?

What strategies / activities / instructions were most helpful in your learning?

Using a scale of 1 = most effective and 10 = least effective, rank the following in order of the most effective way to deliver content.

- |  |                               |
|--|-------------------------------|
|  | Writing notes                 |
|  | Reading the textbook          |
|  | Giving examples               |
|  | Using technology              |
|  | Using diagrams                |
|  | Providing hands-on activities |
|  | Working in groups             |
|  | Repeating content             |
|  | Verbally presenting content   |
|  | Providing worksheets          |

What type(s) of feedback would be most helpful in your learning?





For the following questions, please tick the best response and provide an explanation where required.

	1	2	3	4
	Not Very	$\longleftrightarrow$		Very
When you don't understand something, or when you have any concerns in the class, how comfortable do you feel coming to speak to me?				

How effective do you find my method of teaching?				
Explain your answer:				

	1	2	3	4
	No	$\longleftrightarrow$		Yes
Do you understand the content?				

Does my teaching style suit the way you learn?				
How can I improve this / what should I continue doing?				

Do I communicate my instructions clearly?				
How can I improve this / what should I continue doing?				

Do you think I treat everyone equally and that I am fair?				
Why / why not?				

Do you feel energized, motivated and eager to do work?				
Why / why not?				

Do you enjoy my class?				
Why / why not?				

Describe a good teacher.				
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# How to work in a team

We need to know how to talk to people, how to work with people - whether you like the people, or don't like the people. In school alone, we work with our fellow students every single day. We have to make presentations, orals, performances, and any manner of such things.

The handy guidelines below demonstrate the basic qualities that every member needs for a well functioning team.

## 1. Listening is as important as speaking

Getting your idea across is as important as listening to what others have to say. You never know what you'll hear, but if you don't listen at all, you will never know what you could've heard.

## 2. An open mind

Flexibility is the key. If you demonstrate an open, unbiased approach, the other members of the team will also. Only when the environment is comfortable, will the ideas start to flow.

## 3. Try

A clear focus and purpose is behind every sort of team work. If you slack off, the other members will too and no work will be done. Alternatively, you could succeed in inducing the pique of your fellow members (not good).

## 4. Don't take it personally!

If you pitch an idea but the group decides not to go ahead with it, do not get bitter and stop participating altogether. It is not a personal attack on you. The main thing is to work around this, and look for a better alternative.

*#VicSRCvoices is a rolling series of articles driven by the stories and experiences of student representatives. It's about who we are, what we value, what drives us to act, and what fuels our passions to advocate for what we believe in.*

*Teamwork is a surprisingly simple, yet necessary skill – or rather, an amalgamation of many types of skills. We need it to survive on this planet; like it or not, we are always surrounded by people. **Demi Tangri** from The Mac.Robertson Girls' High School shares her top five teamwork tips for students, by students.*

## 5. Respect, support, encouragement

These apply not only to your team members, but to yourself as well. As important as it is to respect and encourage others, one needs to respect themselves first. Instead of looking at teamwork as a challenge, we should look at it as an opportunity.

**Demi Tangri**





# Share the Dignity: Taking action in focus

No woman should suffer the indignity of choosing between eating and buying sanitary items. I was completely shocked to hear that so many Australian women are not only homeless, but have to face so many obstacles to issues that the majority of us take for granted. Like our monthly period. For these women it can be a traumatic and shameful experience. Many women, either homeless or in shelters, were having to clean themselves in public toilets and use paper towels to create makeshift sanitary pads. This is not OK.

My name is **Shania Hallyburton** and I'm a Year 11 student at Brauer College in Warrnambool, Victoria. Just a month ago I came across *Share the Dignity* on Facebook. Upon reading about their views and beliefs, I knew straight away that I wanted to be a part of this organisation, to help other women in need.

*Share the Dignity* is a non-for-profit organisation that had its first collection on 1st March 2015 when they had received a collection of over 500 packets of sanitary items that were further donated to charities both those helping women in need, and those responding to the Vanuatu disaster relief. After just a few short months, this amazing organisation from Brisbane has turned into a national project, with more than 100 donation points in Victoria alone.

The donations received are distributed to homeless women's shelters, domestic violence shelters and to any women who are in risk or in need. We

ensure that what is collected in each state is distributed within that state. A lot of the times when people donate toiletries to those who need them, pads and tampons have, until now, fallen under the radar, despite the fact that they are one of the biggest necessities for women dealing with their monthly

*#VicSRCvoices* is a rolling series of articles driven by the stories and experiences of student representatives. It's about who we are, what we value, what drives us to act, and what fuels our passions to advocate for what we believe in.

VicSRC Executive member **Shania Hallyburton** from Brauer College in Warrnambool is taking action for women in need.

menstruation. But we are charging this. We aim to share dignity all over Australia.

Sanitary items should be a **right** not a privilege.

Once I had been in contact with one of the head founders, I was asked if I would like to bring it down to my small town, in hope that my community would be just as accepting and giving. My job within this organisation was to approach businesses to be collection points. I am also a main collector for my area so I must collect all the donations from the businesses, and then present them to other charities and organisations within my community.

**My advice:** if there is something you are passionate about, look around for a way that you can help make a difference. Whether that be fundraising or volunteering, your small contribution can have a great impact.

Find out more about *Share the Dignity* at: [www.sharethedignity.com.au](http://www.sharethedignity.com.au) or: [www.facebook.com/sharethedignity](https://www.facebook.com/sharethedignity)



No woman should suffer the indignity of choosing between eating and buying sanitary items.

#sharethedignity



[www.vicsrc.org.au](http://www.vicsrc.org.au)

## VicSRC Recognition Awards 2015:

# The Wrap Up



It was an incredible night for student voice as we celebrated the students, teachers and schools who are making big changes in the world we live in.

Within the bluestone walls of Melbourne icon, the State Library of Victoria, more than 150 special guests stepped into the open courtyard to celebrate best practice in student voice, leadership and participation in Victoria. The State Library holds thousands upon thousands of stories, and on a warm evening on Thursday 29th October, we added one more. Like most good stories, this one has a host of colourful characters, twists and turns, and more than a few superheroes.

### Chapter 1: Setting the scene

The cast: 59 nominations. 34 schools. 1 Minister for Education. Over 150 friends, family and supporters all joining the roar of student voices. We were joined by supporters, like-minded organisations, government representatives, tireless teachers and principals, and most importantly – students. The 2015 VicSRC Recognition Awards was a fantastic and moving celebration of the power of student voice to transform our education system for the better.

The Minister for Education, Hon James

Merlino MP gave the opening address, recalling his experiences at *Congress 2015* and his belief in the importance of student empowerment. Following Minister Merlino's kind words, our student MCs, **Simana Latu** and **Thomas Velican**, introduced our audience to **Matty Sievers** as the Bendigo Senior Secondary College student made the keynote address. It's fair to say that he keenly captured the spirit of the night and reminded us that when students are heard, when our voices are listened to and encouraged, the change is remarkable. View the speech in this issue - it's a fantastic read!

### Chapter 2: Defying expectations

Time and time again, our finalists blew us away profound commitment to student voice. There was a strong sense in the room that we are all connected and part of something bigger; that together, we are powerful.

More than one tear was shed, many laughs had and more than a few sore hands were felt from clapping as we celebrated our incredible finalists. They came from all across the state with incredible stories. From Bendigo to Ballarat, Frankston to Swan Hill, we are so proud of the student action, advocacy and leadership taking place in every corner of the state.



VicSRC Victorian Student Representative Council  
Recognition Awards

# Congratulations!





## Congratulations to:

### **Group Action Award**

*Winner:* Winters Flat Primary School

*Runner up:* Ave Maria College

*Second runner up:* Mount Waverley Secondary College

### **Outstanding SRC of the Year Award**

*Winner:* Sandringham East Primary School

*Runner up:* Sacred Heart College, Geelong

*Second runner up:* Bendigo Senior Secondary College

### **Whole School Approach to Student Voice Award**

*Winner:* Bendigo South East College

*Runner up:* Swan Hill Primary School

*Second runner up:* St Kevin's Primary School, Lower Templestowe

### **Newsboys Foundation Youth Leadership Award**

*Winner:* Roghayeh Sadeghi, Northern Bay P-12 College

*Runners up:* Tess Shacklock, Templestowe College, and Anamika Chowdhury, The MacRobertson Girls' High School

### **SRC Teacher Advisor Award**

*Winner:* Hayley Dureau, Mount Waverley Secondary College

*Runner up:* Ash Pike, Northern Bay P-12 College

*Second runner up:* Sarah Kreltszheim, Brighton Secondary College



## Chapter 3: Join the roar of student voices

Student voice is critical in education. The VicSRC Recognition Awards take on extra significance in 2015 as we mark 10 years of VicSRC and Congress, with the roar of student voices building over a decade of student-led advocacy and action. It's a big year which has given us a chance to celebrate where we have been and how far meaningful student voice and representation has come in the last ten years.

We had the pleasure of working with a judging panel who truly value student voice in education. Our thanks goes to Demi Irwin (VicSRC Executive member), representatives from the Department of Education and Training, Sandy Shaw (CEO, Newsboys Foundation) and Zich Zichy-Woinarski QC (Chairman, Newsboys Foundation) for your time and commitment during the selection process.

We also thank the Department of Education and Training, under the leadership of Minister for Education James Merlino MP, and the Newsboys Foundation for their fantastic support of the VicSRC Recognition Awards.

Students are at the centre of everything we do. We've come so far in ten years, and we're so driven by how far we can go together. Keep the stories and the action and the advocacy coming.

When we challenge expectations of what students can do, the possibilities are limitless!

**VicSRC**

## Will you drive with us?

*The VicSRC is led by 15 students who make up the VicSRC Executive. At the VicSRC Recognition Awards on 29 October, 17 year old **Matty Sievers** made the keynote address. The Bendigo Senior Secondary College student is in his first term on the Executive, and he's determined to make the most of it. We hope you enjoy his powerful speech.*

Good evening. It is such an honour to be here tonight with such distinguished guests: supporters, like-minded organisations, government representatives, tireless teachers and principals, and most importantly – students.

There's a story I'd like to share with you all. This story, although based half in truth and half in fiction, is a story that changed the way I view the world.

After winning the Nobel prize in 1918, Professor Max Planck went around Germany giving talks. His driver heard the talk so many times that he knew it off by heart, and one day asked Planck if he could give the address. Planck agreed, they changed places, and the lecture came off famously. But then came the Q&A section. And sure enough, the first question was one that the driver could not for the life of him answer. So he replied rather patronisingly: "I'm surprised to hear such an elementary question on high energy physics here in Munich. It's so simple, I'm going to let my chauffeur answer it."

Now, how does this story relate to student voice? It brings to light two types of knowledge in this world: **Planck Knowledge**, and **Driver Knowledge**. Those who have

Planck Knowledge are the people who, for their topic, it is their life and they know it inside out. Those with Driver Knowledge are the people who observe the topic and make judgements based on their observations.

In our school system for many years, the decisions were made by the Drivers. These Drivers have been through school, no doubt. But the key words there are: **have been**. Drivers of course have important insight into what school is like today. But any education system is left wanting when it misses the fundamental piece of the puzzle in the decision making: the passenger or, better yet, the students.

So when someone says, to me, 'why does student voice matter' or, 'why does the VicSRC matter?', I tell them that you wouldn't put a blindfold on a driver and then put a passenger in the car with them. So why do the same with our schools?

Students don't just deserve a say in the way their schools are governed and run, we **need** a say. To do that, we need to be at the decision making table together. We need to have hands on the wheel as well. Which is why this event is so special.

Tonight, we're celebrating and acknowledging students and teachers across Victoria who have taken it upon themselves to get involved with their school and to clasp their hands on the wheel and drive their education in a better direction.

To see so many people give up their Thursday night to come here and celebrate student voice, shows that this is an issue many of us care passionately about. And to see Student Voice as a main priority in the recently





released Education State is fantastic, and makes all the effort we've put in so far worth it.

The VicSRC has just celebrated our 10th anniversary. In that amount of time, we have achieved **more than just barbecues and fundraisers**; we've pushed beyond that into new territory of **school leadership and governance**. The impact we have had has been felt far and wide. Just from the turn out tonight, from seeing all facets of the Education system represented in solidarity for student voice, we cannot even begin to think what the next ten years will bring to students across our state.

What I think people are starting to realise is that, when students are heard, when our voices are listened to and encouraged, the change is remarkable. We see schools enable the innovators and dreamers and artists and scientists and thinkers who will change the world for the better. These schools will bring out people who will follow their passion, people who will care for others and care for themselves. People who will nurture one another, and make positive changes to the world we live in. All because they came from a system that did the same for them.

That is why student voice matters. That's why we need the time of day to be heard. That's why we need to be listened to and that is why we need to keep working together to make student voice no longer a privilege or a token gesture, but a right and a regular occurrence in all schools across Victoria.

**Together we can transform the nature of our education system. We can turn it into something profound that is talked about across the world.** Students in America and Europe will look at Victoria as an example of how education should be: a system that positions students, teachers and policy makers in partnership. We are a lucky country in that we can critique and adapt our education system; let's not waste that opportunity.

So I ask all educators, principals, parents and board members:

***Will you drive with us?***

**Matty Sievers**

## Elections and SRC planning

**W**hat does 2016 look like for action and advocacy at your school? Now is the time to get your plans in place for an impactful year to come.

Exams. Elections. Key dates. Small ideas. Big ideas. Everything in between. There's so much happening but when you have a moment to breathe, take the chance to think about what you and your SRC team want to drive for next year!

What changes do you want to make? What impact do you want to have? Looking beyond sausage sizzles and fundraising, what are the issues you and your team want to tackle to make a difference - not just to your educational experience, but of students to come?

At Congress 2015, student delegates discussed, debated and decided on the Belief Statements that form the VicSRC's advocacy platform for 2015-2016 through the 10th annual Congress parliamentary-style debate. The eight key issues that were voted in are what the Executive team is working on right now, and you can too:

### Key issues 2015-2016

- Facilities
- Student-Teacher Relationships
- School Leadership and Governance
- Student Wellbeing and Welfare
- School Funding
- School Clusters
- Environmental Issues
- Curriculum



See the Belief Statements 2015-2016 in full to help spark your thoughts: [www.vicsrc.org.au/news/congress-2015-belief-statements-defined](http://www.vicsrc.org.au/news/congress-2015-belief-statements-defined)

Keep the ideas, advocacy and action coming! If you need support and advice with your planning, campaigns and activities, please reach out: 03 9267 3744 or [info@vicsrc.org.au](mailto:info@vicsrc.org.au)

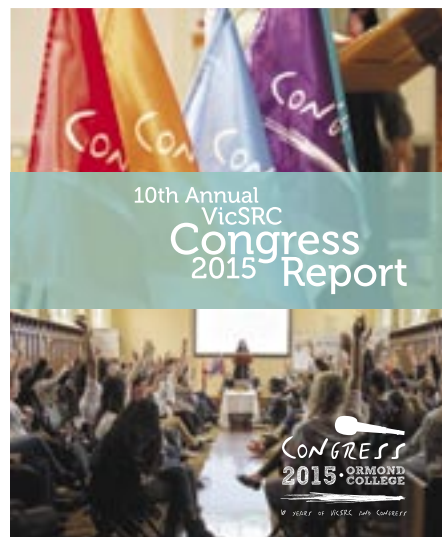
## Congress Report available

**T**he full 2015 VicSRC Congress Report is now available for downloading from the VicSRC website: <http://ow.ly/T9Tha>

This report contains all the details of Congress - intentions, a report of what happened, Belief Statements and Action Pitch ... and lots of photos of three days of discussion, debate, decision-making ... as well as laughter and energy.



VicSRC Victorian Student Representative Council



## Group Action Award

### Winter's Flat Primary School: Community Leaders

Community Leaders are a part of Winters Flat Primary School's 'Student Leadership Program.' Community Leaders drive and implement sustainability practices, programs, events and curriculum throughout our whole school community. They have helped transform our school culture and the results are amazing. Their student voice is heard and supported very proudly.

Community Leaders work out what their key sustainability concerns are and present action plans to local government. They work with other local schools, helping and supporting them on their sustainability journey.

Our school is now being certified for **5 STARS** through the **ResourceSmart** programs. The Community Leaders have been the game changers to get our school to 5 Stars. They have designed and implemented school policies that have been ratified through School Council: sustainability policy, green purchasing policy, heating and cooling, and events polices at our school. They have introduced a **Nude Food** policy at our school **every day** - no one brings rubbish anymore and, if they do, they take it home with them.

Community Leaders attend leadership conferences, conduct their

own weekly meetings, conduct audits, survey other students and parents, run events, invite guest speakers in, and work with community groups. They promote environmental awards throughout the school, including choosing and presenting a 'Kooka Award' weekly at assemblies and looking after 'Care For' areas across the school.

#### Outcomes

The Community Leaders have transformed our whole school community. Their outcome is widespread.

Our school has dramatically reduced its **energy** (in 2013 we used 56,023kwh; in 2015 we used 42,893kwh), **waste** (in 2012 59m<sup>3</sup>; in 2014 52m<sup>3</sup>; and in 2015 44m<sup>3</sup>) and **water** consumption (saved 1.18 million litres of water), and increased our **biodiversity** (increasing our habitat score from 42 in 2014 to 55 in 2015).

This has been achieved through our Community Leaders running programs and events such as '1/2/3 Layers program' where students make daily weather announcements suggesting the appropriate layers to wear, reducing the use of heaters: everyone must have a jumper on before turning the heater on. Students have created sustainability awards, presented at our weekly assemblies, where they award other students for showing care to the environment. Taking responsibility for your rubbish is seen as a real positive, not as a negative. **Nude Food** everyday has changed the way parents shop, purchasing healthier and less packaged options.

#### Challenges

Changing behavioural habits was a real challenge! Community Leaders could see what needed changing to help our school become more sustainable. Through attending leadership conferences, they were full of confidence; they understood the importance of small steps and of leading by example.

They reached out far and wide, making rich connections to office staff,





cleaners, parents, teachers, students and local organisations. They conducted audits and surveys, collected data and presented their findings to the whole school. **The proof was evident: change needed to occur!** Their **Nude Food Every Day** policy, waste awards and 1/2/3 layers program helped get their message across, radically reducing our waste/energy at school, home and community.

## Next steps

Our Community Leaders implement change from the ground up. Concerned for the environment and the state of the world around them, they have demonstrated to our school community what it means to be leaders in sustainability. They will continue to make changes, work with other schools, and community groups working with local government. They are now working on making Castlemaine **Plastic Bag Free** by making connections through local government and shops.

They are enthusiastic, full of ideas, helpful and encouraging. These students are challenging all of us to reduce our carbon footprint and make positive changes at school and at home. They promote, enable, monitor and reward good practice and are responsible for maintaining the high profile of sustainability at our school and community. We thank our Community Leaders for leading their generation towards a brighter future.

## How will you invest the prize?

The grant will give our students ample opportunities to continue their leadership across the community. It could be spent on CRT replacement and sending the leading teaching and Community Leaders out to other schools, local organisations etc.

The grant could also be used on our Bush Tucker Garden project where students are working with our local elders to create an indigenous garden, where the elders share local knowledge and create a space where other schools and local community groups can come and learn about our local Koorie history, harvest our grown bush tucker, cook it in our kitchen and listen to our local elders.

The grant could also be spent on sending our students to more leadership conferences. The students have been involved in **Youth Leading the World** (our school hosted this conference), **GRIP Leadership** and **Do More with Less** run by CERES. Please see our Sustainability Webpage for more details: <http://ow.ly/V2PPu>





## Outstanding SRC of the Year Award

# Sandringham East Primary School: Junior School Council

The Sandringham East Primary Junior School Council (JSC) has just completed a two-year initiative to develop Student Voice in our school. The changes have been based on solid research and consultation with our student community and have resulted in some significant changes to both the structure and mandate of the JSC.

We nominated for this award because our JSC has successfully and authentically developed Student Voice within our school community. We have sought ways to enable students to develop their leadership skills and have been able to set appropriate goals and meet them head on.

Our JSC now has a genuine voice and forum to consult and implement changes through official channels including the School Council.

Over the past two year cycle:

- The JSC has presented and had approved, a new fundraising initiative to support the **Story Dogs Reading Program** within our school.
- The structure of the JSC was expanded to include Level 1-6 students and we have modified the election process to allow for a mentoring term with both current and next year's Councils working hand in hand.
- The JSC has been working with the School Council and Strategic Planning committee to consult on upgrades to the school playground and



- The JSC is in the initial stages of development of a transition program for local kinder children as they prepare to start school.

## Challenges

Without any formal funding, it has been challenging to resource projects and coordinate time between staff and students. This has meant that all JSC activities and planning have taken place during lunchtime and after school. The cost of leadership Professional Development has resulted in limited attendance of both students and staff at these fundamental events with less than 50% of the JSC participating.

## Next steps

The next steps are very clear for our JSC. They are currently developing a **Transition Program** to speak to 4 and 5 year old children at local Kindergartens to help prepare them for primary school. This community outreach program will enable JSC members to actively contribute to the broader community and lay the foundation for future relationships.

## How will you invest the prize?

We are excited to win the **Outstanding SRC of the Year Award** and aim that the prize money will further help us to grow student voice and leadership. The \$1500 prize money will be invested in the JSC program, into leadership training and succession planning. The money will allow for the entire JSC to participate in leadership opportunities, develop their public speaking and the release of staff, giving JSC members time to consult within school hours with community groups such as Rotary. This external mentoring would provide valuable support and guidance for future development of student voice within the Sandringham East Community.





### Whole School Approach to Student Voice Award

## Bendigo South East College: SRC



**S**tudent voices are heard throughout Bendigo South East College. The Student Representative Council is a focus for this, but all members of the College also are involved in campaigns and other initiatives.

This year the SRC facilitated a Student Curriculum Task Force. This Task Force feeds directly back to the Principal and 2016 Curriculum Task Force. A cross-section of students from all year levels, levels of achievement and interests is selected to meet weekly to discuss the school curriculum. They talk about what works, what doesn't and, in an ideal world, what school would look, feel and be like for them. As part of this Task Force, a student travelled with members of the 2016 Taskforce to Sydney to look at different schools in order to generate ideas.

The SRC presidents are also members of the College Council, allowing student opinions to be voiced on the big issues in our school community.

We are working to make the SRC even more student advised and controlled. BSE Virtual, our school's online system, has grown this year with a range of new features. On this virtual messaging system, the SRC will soon have its own account, allowing an even easier way for students to contact the SRC. Previously, suggestions and feedback have been sent through the SRC facilitator.

Student participation also occurs in other areas of the College. The College runs a student admin program each semester where students help in our Student Services Office and canteen one day a week for a term as work experience.

### Outcomes

By sharing decision making between students and staff, more ideas are generated, different perspectives are gained and a deeper student-teacher relationship is created. The huge range of leadership roles across all year levels provides opportunities for students to get more involved and increases student participation.

Giving more students a chance to contribute has encouraged their peers to do the same, creating a chain reaction. This has been clearly evident with the number of campaigns and initiatives carried out by not only the SRC but also involving all members of the college. For example, at our College swimming carnival, the SRC ran a photobooth

*instagram* competition, and this proved to be highly successful in encouraging student voices and participation.

### Challenges

The main challenge we face as a school in terms of student voice would be getting students comfortable with discomfort. What we mean by this is getting students used to speaking out and having a say in their own curriculum. We already have so many students doing this, such as our brilliant taskforce who improve our school on a weekly basis. What we really want to achieve is each and every student feeling comfortable and safe giving their personal opinion on the working of their school. After all, it is their education and future we really want to see excelling.

The next step for our school would be getting all teachers comfortable with student voice. Often, it can be confronting for them to be given feedback about their teaching or the way they are going about something, particularly if it is coming from someone younger than them. However by making all teachers comfortable with student voice, students will then feel more confident to have their say in a way where both parties are respected. If everyone is on the same page, amazing things will happen both in and out of the classroom.

### How will you invest the prize?

We will use the grant money to get more students to a variety of leadership and student voice workshops, such as the VicSRC Congress and the Halogen Foundation. This is because the students who have attended workshops this year have found them extremely valuable; we would love for all student leaders from all year levels, not just the SRC, to experience the benefits of these programs.



## SRC Teacher Advisor Award

# Hayley Dureau: Mount Waverley Secondary College



**H**ayley Dureau is Head of Student Leadership at Mount Waverley Secondary College. She was nominated for this Award by students in various leadership teams at the College.

### Student Leaders:

"As Student Leaders at the College, we have grown immensely over the past year. Much of this has been as a result of working with Miss Dureau through the Student Leadership teams that she has set up and worked with over the past year.

Hayley Dureau's passion for giving students an opportunity to reach their full potential and achieve their goals inspires us. She has a bright, optimistic personality, a wonderful sense of humour that never fails to cheer us up, and an incredibly motivating work ethic. She always works with the Student Leaders productively and never shuts down our sometimes crazy ideas, always trying to find ways to use our ideas in some way.

She sets a tremendous precedent for the Student Leaders as our role model, putting us before herself, and always being there for us. She has empowered the Student Leaders to become independent, because knowing that she trusts the Student Leaders is a wonderful feeling, and she is truly inspiring. Everything she does is with purpose; she puts in endless amounts of time, effort, energy, passion and thought into Student Leadership at the College, and she literally never stops. It's no wonder why all the Student Leaders gravitate towards her."

### Outcomes

#### Student Leaders:

"Miss Dureau has organised **Leadership Reflection Days** to encourage us to constantly look at our goals and establish cohesive leadership teams. As a consequence, we have all developed valuable leadership skills, becoming proactive and developing our teamwork, communication, problem-solving skills.

Getting out of your comfort zone is never easy, but Miss Dureau has made sure that we become self-regulated, independent leaders who are mindful, intentional and thoughtful. She inspires the leadership teams to put themselves forward and to take on challenges. She has sparked the fire within us, and enabled us to use our passion and drive to make a difference."

### Challenges

#### Hayley Dureau:

"The biggest challenge has been starting Leadership teams at Years 9, 10 and 11, and **Teach the Teacher** from scratch. There's never enough time! We're running meetings before school and almost every day at lunch time.

The Student Leaders are often high-achieving students who have incredibly high expectations of themselves and enormous workloads due to the amount of things they do. Seeing the students learn to balance leadership and school work and prioritise and delegate is such a wonderful thing to watch.

We have also needed to bridge the gap between the Student Leaders and staff and the wider community; we have done this by students presenting at staff meetings and School Council and writing articles on the website.

The biggest challenge is forming a sustainable Student Leadership structure over the long term, not just for a particular cohort."

### Advice

#### Hayley Dureau:

"Believe you can make a huge difference to your school and to the lives of the students you work with. Student Voice is so powerful and, by providing an avenue/program for these students to lead, you can completely



change their school experience and that of many other students and staff. You bring out the best in students when you believe in them and allow them to take on responsibilities and show their initiative in a range of areas. Students become more resilient, confident and their overall happiness and wellbeing is enhanced by participating in student-led events, teams and initiatives.

### How will you invest the prize?

#### Hayley Dureau:

"I will use the money to provide training for the 2016 Student Leadership teams. This year I organised and facilitated **Leadership Reflection Days** mid-year. I would love to expand on that idea and have a two-day training program for the 2016 leaders at the end of 2015 and then another planning day at the beginning of 2016, in addition to the 2016 **Reflection Day**. I would use the money to invite guest speakers and purchase training materials for the Student Leaders.

We are also looking at combating litter and rubbish in our school, so any left-over money might be used towards that campaign next year."





## Newsboys Foundation Youth Leadership Award

**Roghayeh Sadeghi:**

**Northern Bay P-12 College, Peacock Campus**



**A**t the Peacock Avenue Campus of Northern Bay P-12 College in Geelong, I have challenged myself to be the best person I can be.

I am one of the Campus Leaders. Over the past few years I have encouraged students to do their best, be comfortable with themselves and others regardless of their background, religion, sexuality, gender and differences. *Student voice for me is everything!* I strongly believe that young leaders have the power and knowledge to make the world go around!

It is absolutely important that everyone can speak up and talk about their ideas and opinions as well as doing what they love without being judged or made fun of.

I've helped my classmates to dig deep inside and find out who they really are, just like me, when I found out who I could be, my natural self!

### Outcomes

I've been working towards making our school an even better and enjoyable place for everyone to come, learn and have fun at the same time. Recently I have been working towards having the *Peer to Peer* and *Teach the Teacher* programs happening in our school to support students all around the school.

I have attended many different conferences, including the 2015 **VicSRC Congress**, youth voice conference,

**Stand Out Summit** and many more. By attending these, I have learnt many new skills that have helped me teach other young leaders and encourage them to stand up for what they believe in.

I've also helped with many fundraisers including casual dress day, footy colours day, national CANTEEN bandana selling week, Legacy week, BBQ day and Toucan appeal. These fundraisers have helped the MS Foundation, CANTEEN Australia, Fight Cancer Foundation and people who are in need of food and money.

### Challenges

Some of the challenges I have encountered are keeping everyone on task when we have our meetings, making sure everyone does their job, and making sure everyone has a chance to talk and be heard. Making sure that everyone has the support they need can also be a challenge. I have enjoyed these challenges because I have learned how to face them and been able to become a better leader.

### Next steps

I want to encourage the Senior Campus at my school to have an SRC and develop student voice, as this is the campus I will be at next year. Eventually I want to go to



University and become a lawyer. I want to become a lawyer because I like standing up for people who need a voice.

### How will you invest the prize?

Winning the **Newsboys Foundation Youth Leadership Award** will enable me to create a better school for my classmates and to develop my and other students' leadership skills by attending conferences like the **VicSRC Congress**. I would like to also work with the other school campuses and make their SRCs as powerful as ours, as well as bring new skills from their campus to mine.

I would also like to be involved in my fundraisers and work with organisations like **GAWS**, **One Girl Foundation** and the **Cotton On Foundation** and their work in Uganda.



# VicSRC presents at Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse

What do students think would make schools safer for students? Two members of the VicSRC Executive were recently invited to travel to Sydney to take part in the Schools Roundtable of the **Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse**, and to talk about child-safe and student-centred approaches that empower students in this vital but difficult area.

## The Royal Commission

The **Royal Commission into Child Sexual Abuse** is the largest Royal Commission in Australia's history that focuses on the sexual abuse of children in the institutions that are there to care for them.

The Royal Commission is examining what institutions and governments could and should do to better protect children against child sexual abuse in institutional contexts. This includes considering ways to ensure that the types of institutions children commonly engage with have effective mechanisms in place and are subject to appropriate external scrutiny to prevent, identify and appropriately respond to child sexual abuse.

The Commission is using case studies, submissions to its **Schools Issues Paper** and private sessions with representatives to inform both government and non-government school systems on how to strengthen child protection frameworks and minimise the risks of child sexual abuse. This aims to reduce the fears and barriers that remain for schools and their staff that may prevent them from

effectively identifying, reporting and responding to child sexual abuse.

To determine this, the perspectives of those in the school seats is vital. As Executive members of the Victorian SRC, we (**Thomas Velican** and **Liz Chiem**) were invited to a Schools Roundtable meeting in Sydney to represent the voices and perspectives of students concerning the matter of child abuse.

## Student perspectives

Student perspectives on the research and policy work of the Commission are essential to creating effective solutions, and an environment in which we can hope to solve these issues. Being a student, knowing other students and knowing what makes a school a safer and more enjoyable place, are the key reasons why student perspectives are paramount in any proposed response.

Research has demonstrated that the risk of child sexual abuse decreases where children are informed about boundaries and appropriate behaviour, and are empowered to voice concerns.

We appreciated the opportunity to address the Commission and to take part in the discussions. Being flown to Sydney to join the Roundtable was an experience in itself; waking up at 3:30 am for a 6:30 am flight ... and getting on the flight with just a minute to spare was an exciting and stressful way to start the day!

However we were greeted with smiles all around and everyone at the Roundtable was extremely welcoming and eager to hear us contribute to the engaging discussion. Throughout this discussion it became clear why we were there and how we could add our own expertise to help the Commission. It was surprising to us that we were the only students present, but because of that, we recognised the essential value of the perspectives we could offer.

## Our ideas

We argued that children and young people often have clear ideas about their own safety and want to be involved in decisions affecting them. In particular, we have heard from students that they believe child safety concerns can be better addressed where adults and institutions work in partnership with them.

Many of the other Roundtable members were shocked to hear that students are rarely, if ever, informed by their schools of how to file a formal complaint. It demonstrated the lack of connection between a student and their education institution, how complaints – if ever made – can often get lost within the system and that it takes much too long for the situation to be addressed.

Furthermore, we suggested that issues of relationships – healthy or otherwise – and how to identify, prevent and respond to them, be incorporated into the Health Education curriculum. Schools, staff, and prevention programs have important roles to play in empowering children and educating them about sexual abuse. Providing them with environments in which they feel safe to disclose is crucial. This child-focused culture is also supported by approaches that see student participation in decision-making as core business, be that through an SRC or through other opportunities within the school, and not as an added-on extra.





We also brought up the importance of having forums for student voice, such as an SRC, in schools. Having an SRC ensures adaptability, student voice and transparency throughout the school. Allowing students to discuss these issues amongst themselves, and to adequately and effectively communicate with the school leadership has numerous benefits but is overall the only way in which transparency and a safe and successful school environment can be established.

We emphasised the importance of transparency within the school community and of maintaining equality in relationships between students and teachers to be able to ensure the best possible environment in schools. Transparency was a key discussion topic both in reference to students having the ability to be transparent on the issues that they may be facing, as well as in reference to a school culture where transparency inspires a safer and happier environment in which students can grow and learn.

### What we learnt

The overall experience was itself empowering for us. It was great to see the strong focus on the voices of students in the Roundtable and we are very thankful towards Justice Coate and Commissioner Murray for facilitating the discussion, and allowing us to express our opinions from a student perspective. The experience provided us with another platform to show how vital student voice is and how much change can be created if students are engaged. It was significant to us that the Commission recognised that, when we challenge the expectations of what students can do, the possibilities are limitless – and that students and teachers working in partnership can transform the nature of education.

The experience was eye-opening for many participants to the possibilities for the active role of young people in not only education but in the far wider community. It was a privilege to be able to represent students at this forum and to gain an amazing experience for ourselves.

### Next steps

After lunch we were all disappointed to have to go, having so much more to say and hear, but we knew that our contributions were going to make a difference and we were happy to end the day knowing we had done something to make schools and communities better places for students.

The VicSRC is planning to work closely with the Commission. As there are several years left in the Commission's work, the VicSRC may be fortunate enough to participate in other roundtables, consultations and meetings. The work the Commission is doing is going to benefit students all over Victoria to ensure a better environment for them to learn and grow up in and, in this way, aligns with the vision of the VicSRC about improving the quality of schools and education around the state.

**Thomas Velican and Liz Chiem**  
*VicSRC Executive*

## Youth advisory group case studies

In 2014–15, the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YACVic) worked with the Victorian Government's Office for Youth to create a series of case studies about youth advisory groups.

There are 12 case studies: six from rural and regional Victorian groups and six from state-wide or Melbourne-based groups. Each case study shows how the different groups engaged with young people, achieved goals and overcame challenges.

The series will be useful for young people or youth workers hoping to start or maintain youth advisory, action or reference groups.

YACVic thanks each of the groups profiled for their help in creating the case studies.

**Find the Case Studies at: <http://ow.ly/Vfrkc>**

## Student Voice and The Education State: Ideas and action resources for schools

With the launch of *The Education State*, the Department of Education and Training (DET) has developed the new **Framework for Improving Student Outcomes**. This includes six initiatives to help schools lift student achievement, wellbeing and engagement:

- Empowering Students and Building School Pride
- Building Practice Excellence
- Curriculum Planning and Assessment
- Building Leadership Teams
- Setting Expectation and Promoting Inclusion
- Building Communities

Student voice and participation is integral to every aspect of students' learning and development. Practices that encourage student voice and the active participation of students are inherent to **all six** framework areas. Whatever your school's priority areas, we encourage you to consider ways in which student voice and participation can be amplified.

To assist you in the development and implementation of the **Framework for Improving Student Outcomes**, the VicSRC can provide you with support and advice, resources, networks, and professional development. Some ideas are contained in a resource available from the VicSRC website: <http://ow.ly/VIHy3> Further details from this resource will be available in the next issue of *Connect* in February 2016.

In early December, VicSRC Executive members **Matty Sievers** and **Liz Chiem** took part in a panel discussion (with Principals, Regional Directors etc) around these initiatives at the **Bastow Institute of Educational Leadership**. They spoke about the central importance of student voice and participation in all six areas, and how this can enhance a *Positive Climate for Learning*. They provided practical ideas and information about initiatives such as the *Teach the Teacher* program.

***“We believe that there should be mandatory student involvement in decision making processes by partaking in key policy meetings including, but not limited to, School Council meetings ... We want a choice, give us a voice! It’s our education!”***

## **VicSRC 2016 Key Dates: Save these dates:**

**T**he VicSRC has so much planned for 2016! In preparation, please mark the following **key dates** in your diary and stay tuned in early 2016 for all the details on how to book, register or apply.

- **2015 Regional Conferences**  
12 Metropolitan and Regional locations  
1 March - 6 May 2016 (*Term 1 and Term 2*)
- **Congress 2016**  
Ormond College, The University of Melbourne  
6, 7, 8 July 2016
- **2016 VicSRC Recognition Awards**  
Metropolitan Melbourne  
Thursday 20 October 2016

**Are you  
interested in  
*Teach the Teacher*  
in 2016?**

**Contact Emma Myers  
on 9267 3714 or  
[projects@vicsrc.org.au](mailto:projects@vicsrc.org.au)**

**Visit:  
[www.teachtheteacher.org.au](http://www.teachtheteacher.org.au)  
to find out more**  
(PS: there’s a new video there)

## **Are you a VicSRC Member School? .... Membership discounts**

Did you know that you can receive discounted event prices if you have a VicSRC Membership?

If you are not a member school and would like to take advantage of discounted ticket prices to the VicSRC Congress and Regional Conferences, simply select ‘*VicSRC Membership (Annual School Membership)*’ at the start of your online registration. Or check about membership on-line at:

**[www.vicsrc.org.au/get-involved/school-membership](http://www.vicsrc.org.au/get-involved/school-membership)**

Need help? Unsure if you **are** a member? Contact **Fiona Campbell, VicSRC Events and Communications Officer** on **03 9267 3777** or **[communications@vicsrc.org.au](mailto:communications@vicsrc.org.au)**



**To sign up to the VicSRC  
online e-newsletter ... visit:**

**[www.vicsrc.org.au/joinin/maillinglist](http://www.vicsrc.org.au/joinin/maillinglist)**

**VicSRC** Victorian Student  
Representative Council

The **VicSRC** receives funding support from the **Victorian Department of Education and Training** and the **Catholic Education Office, Melbourne**. It is auspiced by and based at the **Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YACVic)**. It can be reached there on **03 9267 3744** or, for the cost of a local call from outside Melbourne, on **1300 727 176**; or by email: **[manager@vicsrc.org.au](mailto:manager@vicsrc.org.au)**





## Student Voice: Listening to students to improve education through digital technologies: *Special issue call for papers*

**Guest editors:** Dr Valentina Grion, Dr Stefania Manca, Dr Cristina Devecchi and Dr. Ale Armellini

This special issue of **BJET** (Volume 48, Issue 3), will be published in May 2017. This issue seeks to explore the synergy between Student Voice approaches and digital technologies in creating a space for student voice.

Around two decades ago, a movement within the field of education known as 'Student Voice' started spreading internationally. The first developments date back to the 90s and the first years of the 2000s when some researchers, coming mostly from English speaking contexts, focused on school children's perspectives on their teaching and learning experience. Children and young people, therefore, became legitimate and necessary co-participants of change processes and reforms of education. More recently, and due to major changes in the context of higher education, students' voice has also undergone a process of legitimisation as central to developing a university fit for students' experience and expectations, but also useful and fitting social and economic expectations and needs.

At the same time, the use of technology has disrupted the traditional model of frontal teaching and opened the way to pedagogical and curricular innovation. One of the consequences of such innovation has been the redefinition of who the student is and the expectations related to the two key concepts of participation and engagement. However, there is no consensual agreement on what the two terms refer to, thus leading to a lack of conceptual clarity on the nature, limits and possibilities of the student engagement and participation.

Within such developments, the original expressions 'Student Voice' and 'Pupil's Voice' now include terminology such as 'student participation', 'youth-adult partnership', and 'youth activism'

among others, reflecting the widespread development of initiatives based on this perspective, and the resulting variety of readings and of practices that have developed in different contexts and according to three trajectories.

The first trajectory is mostly tied to the initial developments of research on Student Voice oriented towards listening to the voice of students at schools and universities, as a key tool to improve teaching and learning practices. Within this perspective students represent 'unique' points of view with regard to what takes place in classrooms, precious sources of information, providing precise and constructive considerations on teaching.

The second trajectory concerns the direction taken by Student Voice with regard to its Deweyan origins: the purpose of education is to build the democratic citizen and schools cannot take any other shape than that of a laboratory of democracy. This is a genuinely basic and pervading principle only where there are contexts in which joint efforts are made by every member of the community to reach the common good by means of the complete sharing of powers and responsibilities. Likewise, calls for universities to play a more 'civic' role and a new agenda on social impact, demand a re-definition of the use of technology and the involvement of students.

A third path concerns the research methodologies used. Due to the fact that approaches have been shifted from

doing research on students to doing research with them, there is a need to rethink roles and to create structures and processes to support students in the development of the skills required to become research collaborators and leaders within such processes.

Next to these claims, in the last years there has been an increasing emphasis on the potential of the Internet as a means for improving students' and young people's participation to digital public spaces. The Internet has been recognised as a technology enabling participatory aptitude, facilitating content creation and supporting civic engagement. The rise of *Web 2.0* tools and of social network sites has also been viewed as a driver for young people's participation: from discussing in a web forum to creating content in a *wiki*, from sharing useful resources to using information in every field of life – education, politics, economy, society. Indeed, new digital media are offering young people opportunities to undertake participative roles with positive implications on the development of their abilities (empowerment) enabled by the use of social media and inspired by the principles of the 'participatory culture'.

### About the call

Although the literature on the Student Voice perspective is nowadays quite broad and expanding, there is a need for further in-depth analysis on the specific role played by digital technologies in creating a space for student voice.

This **Special Issue** aims at promoting scholars' and practitioners' reflection with particular reference to the three trajectories of development of Student Voice in any educational context from primary to higher education:

- Student Voice as a key tool to improve teaching and learning practices
- Student Voice as a key tool to play a more 'civic' role and a new agenda on social impact
- Student Voice as a key tool to support students in the development of

the skills required to become research collaborators and leaders within such processes

The call is open to theoretical and empirical studies, reviews of the literature or critical analyses carried out in the area.

Contributors are encouraged to provide in-depth analysis on the specific role played by digital technologies in creating a space for student voice: *How are students heard? How are their views taken into account in the design, monitoring and assessment of their learning? How is technology, and digital technology in particular, used to enhance their participation and engagement?*

### Important dates and submission process

Deadline for submissions: 1 March 2016

First decision from the review process: 1 May 2016

Final copy from authors to guest editors: 5 January 2017

Accepted papers available online from: 15 May 2017

Publication: May 2017

Manuscripts should not normally exceed 4000 words, including references. All contributions should be prepared following the BJET Guidelines for Authors and

submitted via the BJET manuscript submission system (see <http://bit.ly/1IZUupy>). All submissions will go through the usual process of blind peer-review. The editors will select papers for the special issue on the basis of their academic merit, quality and overall coverage of key learning design and teacher-led inquiry themes in the volume.

For further information and initial advice about the appropriateness of your proposed paper for this special issue, contact the Guest Editors: **Valentina Grion**, **Stefania Manca**, **Cristina Devecchi** and **Ale Armellini**.

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University of Northampton, UK:

# International Journal Of Student Voice

The International Journal of Student Voice (IJSV) is a peer-reviewed, open access e-journal publishing on the ways in which students co-lead their schools and communities by collaborating with teachers, administrators, and community stakeholders to define problems and develop potential solutions and/or take the lead on making change in their schools and communities. IJSV, established in 2015 by the Pennsylvania State University, seeks submissions from teachers, students, researchers, administrators, and community stakeholders. In addition to traditional research-focused submissions, we welcome and encourage practitioner reflections and multi-media submissions.

You can access IJSV at: <https://ijsv.psu.edu/>

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The Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YACVic) published a series of handbooks in 2004 called *Taking Young People Seriously*. These handbooks led the way for youth participation in Victoria. **Yerp** is an on-line resource that modernises the handbooks in an information-packed website perfectly suited to smartphones and mobile devices.

Its unique, fun design was developed in consultation with over 300 young people and youth sector workers throughout Victoria.

**Yerp** supports one big idea: that young people have an important role in shaping the present and future of Victoria's communities.

**[www.yerp.org.au](http://www.yerp.org.au)**



## Save the Date: Student Voice 2016

The follow-on international Student Voice conference/seminar has been announced for July 2016. It is a collaborative effort between Pennsylvania State University, the University of Vermont and UP for Learning. The dates are **July 6-8** and the title is: **International Seminar: Amplifying Student Voice and Partnership.**

This will continue to be a small, basically invitational event. For more information as it becomes available, and for early expressions of interest to attend, contact **Helen Beattie, UP for Learning: hnbeattie@gmail.com**

## The Case for Inclusive Learning Systems

The Case for Inclusive Learning Systems is a *Dusseldorp Forum* report based on a series of national consultations, a review of research evidence and a review of current policy and practice.

The report documents successful models already working across the country and how states and territories can build upon this. It also looks at various parts of the education system and includes the voices of young people who are now thriving in education thanks to flexible, inclusive learning approaches.

Download the report at:  
<http://ow.ly/V0m9Z>



## Connect on facebook

Connect has a presence on facebook. Find us at:



<http://ow.ly/L6UvW>

We've been posting some news and links there since June 2013, to complement and extend what you see in the on-line version of *Connect*. It would be great if you could go there and 'like' us, and also watch there for news of each *Connect's* availability on-line - for FREE.

**All about Student Action Teams, including some hyper-linked mini-case studies, at:**

**[www.asprinworld.com/student\\_action\\_teams](http://www.asprinworld.com/student_action_teams)**

## Student Voice Research and Practice facebook group

[www.facebook.com/groups/studentvoicepage/](http://www.facebook.com/groups/studentvoicepage/)

This open *facebook* group was initially established by Professor Dana Mitra, and is now supported by the work of academics, practitioners and students throughout the world. It provides a valuable community of people working and interested in the area of 'Student Voice' - in Australia, USA, UK, Italy and elsewhere - as well as access to useful resources and examples, and up-to-date information about initiatives. You can easily log on and join the group at the above address.



# Connect Publications: Order Form

**Tax Invoice:** ABN: 98 174 663 341

To: **Connect**, 12 Brooke Street, Northcote VIC 3070 Australia

e-mail: r.holdsworth@unimelb.edu.au

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## Connect On-Line Subscription (all 6 issues annually e-mailed to you FREE):

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... copies	<i>Reaching High</i> (without DVD)	\$20	\$15*	\$ .....
... copies	<i>Switched On to Learning</i> (maximum of 10 copies per order)	\$ 6	\$ 5*	\$ .....
... copies	<i>Democracy Starts Here</i>	\$ 6	\$ 5*	\$ .....

### Publications available from Connect:

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... copies	<i>Sometimes a Shining Moment</i> (1 available) \$	\$20	\$10*	\$ .....
... copies	<i>A Foxfire Christmas</i> (1 available) \$	\$20	\$10*	\$ .....
... copies	<i>Foxfire 9</i> (1 available) \$	\$10	\$ 5*	\$ .....
... copies	<i>Students and Work</i> (maximum of 10 copies per order)	\$ 6	\$ 5*	\$ .....
... copies	<i>SRC Pamphlets Set</i> (2 sets available) \$	\$ 6	\$ 5*	\$ .....

(\$ check availability before ordering; \* discounted rate for subscribers to **Connect**)

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# Clearinghouse

## Contribute to *Connect*

Anyone may submit an original article to be considered for publication in *Connect* provided he or she owns the copyright to the work being submitted or is authorised by the copyright owner or owners to submit the article. Authors are the initial owners of the copyrights to their works, but by successfully submitting the article to *Connect*, transfer such ownership of the *published* article to *Connect* on the understanding that any royalties or other income from that article will be used to maintain publication of *Connect*.

## ASPRINworld: the *Connect* website!

[www.asprinworld.com/connect](http://www.asprinworld.com/connect)

*Connect* has a website at *ASPRINworld*. The *Connect* section of the website is slowly growing, with information about subscribing, index of recent back issue contents (hyperlinked to PDFs) and summaries of and order information for *Student Councils and Beyond*, *Student Action Teams*, *Reaching High* and *Switched On to Learning*.

*Connect* is now also  
archived and available electronically:  
[research.acer.edu.au/connect](http://research.acer.edu.au/connect)

All issues of *Connect* are archived through the ACER Research Repository: *ACEReSearch*. *Connect* issues from #1 to the current issue are available for **free** download, and recent issues can be searched by key terms. See the *ASPRINworld* site for index details of recent issues, then link to and download the whole issue you are interested in.

[www.informit.com.au](http://www.informit.com.au)

In addition, current and recent issues of *Connect* are now available on-line to libraries and others who subscribe to RMIT's *Informit* site – a site that contains databases of many Australian publications. You can access whole issues of *Connect* as well as individual articles. Costs apply, either by a library subscription to *Informit*'s databases, or through individual payments per view for articles.



Articles from *Connect* are also discoverable through *EBSCOhost* research databases.

[www.asprinworld.com/connect](http://www.asprinworld.com/connect)  
&  
[research.acer.edu.au/connect](http://research.acer.edu.au/connect)

## 'Student Councils and Beyond' On-Line! FREE!

We've almost run out of print copies of the first *Connect* publication: *Student Councils and Beyond* (from 2005). And many of the ideas have subsequently been reflected in the *Represent!* kit from the VicSRC ([www.vicsrc.org.au/resources/represent](http://www.vicsrc.org.au/resources/represent)).

So we have made all of *Student Councils and Beyond* (a compilation of articles and resources from many earlier issues of *Connect*) available on-line for **FREE**. It can be downloaded (as one document or in sections) as PDFs from the *Connect* website. Find it at:

[www.asprinworld.com/connect](http://www.asprinworld.com/connect)

## Local and International Publications Received



*Connect* receives many publications directly or indirectly relevant to youth and student participation. We can't lend or sell these, but if you want to look at or use them, contact us and we'll work something out.

### Australian:

**10th Annual VicSRC Congress Report** (VicSRC, Melbourne, Vic) 2015

**Australasian Democratic Education Community Newsletter** (ADEC, Lane Cove, NSW) July 2015

**Education State: Schools** (Victorian Department of Education and Training, East Melbourne, Vic) September 2015

**Research Developments** (ACER, Camberwell, Vic) December 2015

**TLN Journal** (Teacher Learning Network, Abbotsford, Vic) Vol 22 No 3; Spring 2015

**VicSRC Recognition Awards** (VicSRC, Melbourne, Vic) October 2015

**Western Young People's Independent Network** (WYPIN, Braybrook, Vic) Annual Report 2014-2015

**Yikes** (YACVic, Melbourne, Vic) December 2015

**Youth Affairs Council of Victoria** (YACVic, Melbourne, Vic) Annual Report 2014-2015

### International:

**Rethinking Schools** (Milwaukee, WI, USA) Vol 30 No 1; Fall 2015

## Donate to support *Connect*



*Connect* now has no income except donations and sales of literature (previous page). By supporting *Connect* with donations, you keep us going. Even though we are now solely on-line, there are still costs associated with publication. To make a donation to the work of *Connect*, use the form in this issue or contact us for bank account details in order to make an electronic transfer of funds.

For 36 years ...  
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# Connect On-Line!

Free subscription  
 and materials  
 order form:  
**page 34**

All back issues of **Connect** from 1979 to the present (that's now **36 years!**) are freely available on-line! Thanks to the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), all back issues of **Connect** have been scanned or up-loaded into the ACER's Research Repository: **ACEReSearch**.

You can find these issues of **Connect** at:

**<http://research.acer.edu.au/connect>**

The left-hand menu provides a pull-down menu for you to select the issue number > **browse**; the front cover of the issue is displayed, and you can simply click on the link in the main body of the page to download a PDF of the issue. Recent issues are also **searchable** by key words.

**Connect** has a commitment to the sharing of ideas, stories, approaches and resources about active student participation. We are totally supported by donations!



## Let us know

There may be some gaps or improvements necessary. As you use this resource, let us know what you find. (If an issue of **Connect** seems to be missing, check the issues either side, as **double issues** show up only as one issue number.) If you have any ideas for improving this resource, please let us know.

**Most importantly, please USE this resource.**

All back copies of *Connect* are  
 available on-line ... for free!

**<http://research.acer.edu.au/connect>**

